

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

SUBJECT OR DOCKET NO.: DCA00MM030
Fire on Board M/V Columbia

INTERVIEW OF: Daniel J. Rhodes

DATE: Saturday, June 10, 2000

TIME: 4:10 p.m.

1 P R O C E E D I N G

2 (4:10 p.m.)

3 EXAMINEREXAMINER Mike Jones: It's June 10th,
4 Saturday, 4:10 p.m., we're with Daniel J. Rhodes.
5 Would you spell your last name for us?

6 MR. RHODES: R-H-O-D-E-S.

7 EXAMINEREXAMINER Jones: And can you give us
8 your date birth, please?

9 MR. RHODES: 8/13/64.

10 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: What licenses do you
11 hold or endorsements?

12 MR. RHODES: Third Assistant Engineer, steam
13 and diesel; Lifeboatman; SECTW.

14 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: All right. How long
15 have you been in the marine industry in general?

16 MR. RHODES: Ten years.

17 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: Ten years. When did
18 you come on board with Alaskan Highway, Alaskan Marine
19 Highway?

20 MR. RHODES: The first time was June of 1998
21 and I also came on, officially, June of 1999.

22 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: June of '99, okay.
23 Prior to coming on with Alaskan Marine, where did you
24 work?

25 MR. RHODES: I worked for the — Seafarers

1 International Union.

2 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: Uh-huh.

3 MR. RHODES: Deep sea, as an oiler and pump
4 man.

5 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: How long did you
6 work for them?

7 MR. RHODES: Since 1990.

8 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: Since '90, okay.
9 And did you have any other marine employment prior to
10 that?

11 MR. RHODES: No, I was in the military.

12 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: The military. What
13 branch service were you in?

14 MR. RHODES: U.S. Marine Corps.

15 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: Marine Corps. How
16 long were you in the Marines?

17 MR. RHODES: Four years.

18 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: Four years. Did you
19 have any specialty or MOS?

20 MR. RHODES: I was in 1341 Heavy Equipment,
21 Diesel Mechanic.

22 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: Okay, all right.
23 When did you join the Columbia?

24 MR. RHODES: I joined the Columbia on the 2nd
25 of June, 2000.

1 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: 2nd of June, but
2 that's not your first time on board the Columbia or is
3 it?

4 MR. RHODES: This is my second time aboard.

5 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: Second time aboard.
6 How many ships in the Alaskan Marine Highway System
7 have you worked?

8 MR. RHODES: I worked in the Malaspina (ph)
9 extensively, the Columbia, the Aurora, the Taku (ph),
10 the Mattanusca (ph) and the Lakani (ph), six ships.

11 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: Okay, and how long
12 have you been assigned to the Columbia?

13 MR. RHODES: Oh, I've only been assigned
14 since the 2nd, only a few days.

15 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: Okay, so this was
16 going to be your first time on the Columbia?

17 MR. RHODES: Yes, sir.

18 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: Okay, prior to
19 signing on, on the 2nd of June, give me an idea what
20 your activities were. Where you coming from home or
21 another ship?

22 MR. RHODES: I was coming from home.

23 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: Okay, how long had
24 you been off, prior to joining up on the 2nd?

25 MR. RHODES: About ten days.

1 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: Ten days, okay. And
2 before those ten days, what was your assignment? Were
3 you assigned to --

4 MR. RHODES: I was on the Malaspena.

5 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: So you finished a
6 tour on the Malaspena?

7 MR. RHODES: Uh-huh.

8 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: And you had ten days
9 off?

10 MR. RHODES: Yes, sir.

11 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: Then you joined on
12 the 2nd of June?

13 MR. RHODES: Yes, sir.

14 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: Okay, what I'd like
15 you to do is to relate for me, as best you can
16 recollect, the events or activities that occurred
17 around you, once you came on board on the 2nd. So did
18 you come on in the morning on the 2nd or afternoon?

19 MR. RHODES: Actually, I came on around
20 eleven thirty in the morning. Before I came onto the
21 ship, I drove up from Seattle to Bellingham.

22 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: Okay.

23 MR. RHODES: And I didn't go on the ship
24 right away. I left to go deliver some mail or try to
25 find a post office, well, ~~I'm going~~well, I went to a

1 private post office, deliver some mail, got some fuel,
2 went to a gas station to get a pre-pay calling card,
3 then I came aboard and slept for a couple of hours.

4 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: Okay.

5 MR. RHODES: And I came and had some lunch.

6 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: And you told me you
7 came aboard about what time?

8 MR. RHODES: I came back aboard around ten
9 o'clock, around ten.

10 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: Okay, and then you
11 slept a couple hours?

12 MR. RHODES: Yes, sir. And then -- well, it
13 wouldn't be a couple of hours because I had to come
14 down at eleven thirty. I came down to relieve the
15 watch and then I started learning the plant, freezing
16 tracing out certain parts of the plant, learning how to
17 start and stop the main engines, learned how to start
18 and stop the auxiliary generators, learned where a lot
19 of the emergency systems were, as far as the fire
20 extinguishers, emergency escapes, how to start and stop
21 emergency systems as far as the emergency ---jacket
22 water, emergency fuel, emergency cooling water systems,
23 emergency lube oil and then once I did that, we went
24 out on the run. I also had to test the steering gear,
25 test the telegraph system, which would be the engine

1 order telegraph. It gives you different ~~---~~full
2 ahead, full astern, ~~on the steering~~ and then, I guess,
3 we went underway.

4 When we left underway, we were on what
5 everybody calls an EOT, engine order telegraph drill,
6 which I take ~~---~~engine room control and I control the
7 pitch of the propeller according to the bridge.

8 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES Jones: Do you recall
9 about what time that was?

10 MR. RHODES: We left at, actually, I'm wrong
11 because we didn't -- I didn't -- I was off watch by the
12 time the ship left. I apologize. That was the next
13 day.

14 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: Okay.

15 MR. RHODES: The ship left at, like, 1800,
16 but I was off watch. They went on it. It was like the
17 next day that they did that to me.

18 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: Okay.

19 MR. RHODES: They relieved me around twelve
20 o'clock, but, no, up from twelve to 1800 --

21 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: Uh-huh.

22 MR. RHODES: And so my relief came and then I
23 was off watch when they left.

24 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: Well, I think you
25 already alluded to -- but state for me what your watch

1 is. What times are your watch?

2 MR. RHODES: Twelve to 1800 and from 2400 to
3 06.

4 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: Okay, so that is a
5 six hour watch?

6 MR. RHODES: Yes. sir.

7 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: And do you work six
8 hours on and six hours off?

9 MR. RHODES: Yes, sir, a little less because
10 we get relieved earlier for dinner or lunch.

11 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: Okay.

12 MR. RHODES: We'll come on, like, at eleven
13 thirty and get relieved at 1730 or come on at 2330 and
14 get relieved at zero five thirty.

15 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: Okay.

16 MR. RHODES: So you can say six hours.

17 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: How long do you keep
18 this watch up?

19 MR. RHODES: Two weeks on and two weeks off.

20 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: Okay, now, the
21 evening before the fire, can you tell me how much sleep
22 you got during that time period, the night before the
23 fire?

24 MR. RHODES: Four hours.

25 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: Do you recall what

1 time you went to bed that evening?

2 MR. RHODES: Yes, sir, I went to bed a little
3 around twelve thirty, well, 2430.

4 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: Okay, and up again
5 at?

6 MR. RHODES: Zero five.

7 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: Now, is that a
8 typical amount of time that you rest --

9 MR. RHODES: Yes, sir.

10 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: -- while you're
11 keeping that

12 MR. RHODES: Yes, sir.

13 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: And what is that,
14 four hours?

15 MR. RHODES: Four hours or five hours
16 sometimes.

17 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: Four ~~or~~ to five
18 hours?

19 MR. RHODES: Yes, sir.

20 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: Okay, now, when
21 you're at home, what's normal rest for you in terms of
22 hours?

23 MR. RHODES: About seven hours.

24 ~~EXAMINER~~ EXAMINER JONES: Okay, do you
25 consider that normal for you?

1 MR. RHODES: Sometimes I get up early. I'm
2 used to getting up early.

3 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: Okay, on the
4 average?

5 MR. RHODES: Seven hours.

6 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: Seven hours, all
7 right. So you go from seven hours and then all of a
8 sudden you drop down to four to five hours at a time?

9 MR. RHODES: Yes, sir.

10 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: What can you tell me
11 about that? Is it, —are you able to adapt to that
12 kind of situation well or are there problems with that
13 or, —what can you tell me about keeping that watch?

14 MR. RHODES: I guess, I adapt to it. Yes, I
15 adapt to it. Well, I have to adapt to it. I adapt to
16 it pretty well.

17 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: Do you find that you
18 have to pace yourself more during the day in order to
19 pay attention to not overexerting yourself in terms of
20 work load and that kind of thing?

21 MR. RHODES: No, sir, because we don't work
22 any overtime so we couldn't -- our job is to stay there
23 and just watch and monitor the systems in the engine
24 room and the auxiliary room. They don't let us do too
25 much of anything else.

1 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: Okay, how is your
2 health?

3 MR. RHODES: I just had a physical. They
4 said it was really good. Overweight though. That's
5 about it.

6 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: Okay, no problems?
7 Are you on any medications?

8 MR. RHODES: No, sir.

9 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: Do you take any
10 over-the-counter cold, you know, any cold medications
11 or any of that?

12 MR. RHODES: No, sir.

13 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: You didn't take any
14 of that before the fire, before reporting aboard?

15 MR. RHODES: Before the fire, I took an
16 aspirin because I had a bad headache. That's about it.

17 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: Okay.

18 MR. RHODES: Took an Advil actually.

19 ~~EXAMINER~~EXAMINER JONES: What about meals on
20 board? Do you have enough time working the six on, six
21 off schedule to adequately eat and that kind of thing?

22 MR. RHODES: Yes, sir, they usually bring --
23 the messmen are pretty good about bringing the meals
24 back to us to eat. I usually get up, sometimes, a
25 quarter to eleven and then take a shower and then eat.

1 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: And how is the food?

2 MR. RHODES: It's pretty good.

3 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: All right.

4 MR. RHODES: You get kind of mused
5 sometimes, you know. Sometimes it wears on you.

6 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: Uh-huh.

7 MR. RHODES: The six to six. Sometimes you
8 get mused, but what can you do?

9 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: Well, when that
10 happens, what can you do? Can you ask for relief?

11 MR. RHODES: No, sir, -- not.

12 EXAMINEREXAMINER JONES: So you're forced --
13 okay. Okay, that's all I have right now.

14 EXAMINER TOM: Just to follow a little bit on
15 what you're saying, Mike. Early in the trip when
16 you're standing your six to six, do you feel more
17 rested while your watching, on watch, than say after
18 towards the end of your two weeks, you say you get kind
19 of mused, that six and six rotation, you feel more
20 fatigued during your watch, is that what you mean by
21 that?

22 MR. RHODES: Well, toward the end.

23 EXAMINER TOM: Towards the end of your two
24 week, you start to get drawn down --

25 MR. RHODES: Yes, sir.

1 EXAMINER TOM: -- where at the beginning --
2 MR. RHODES: The beginning --
3 EXAMINER TOM: -- pretty fresh when you're on
4 duty?
5 MR. RHODES: Yes, sir.
6 EXAMINER TOM: Okay, on the day of the fire,
7 you -- what was your watch -- I'm sorry I didn't --
8 MR. RHODES: Oh, it was twelve to 1800.
9 EXAMINER TOM: Twelve to 1800 and, prior to
10 that, it was --
11 MR. RHODES: Twenty-four to zero six.
12 EXAMINER TOM: Okay, from the time you woke
13 up, what time did you wake up before your noon time
14 watch?
15 MR. RHODES: At eleven o'clock.
16 EXAMINER TOM: At eleven o'clock and you went
17 to lunch after that?
18 MR. RHODES: Did I go to lunch that day? I
19 guess I did, I had a little bit of lunch.
20 EXAMINER TOM: Okay.
21 MR. RHODES: In fact, no, in fact I did not
22 eat lunch. I didn't want to eat. I didn't like the
23 menu.
24 EXAMINER TOM: Okay, so you went down to
25 relieve the watch around --

1 MR. RHODES: I relieved the watch at around
2 eleven twenty-five.

3 EXAMINER TOM: Okay, eleven twenty-five you
4 relieved the watch. Now, if you would please, I'd like
5 you to try to visualize, if you could, going down into
6 the engine room after, you know, waking up and doing
7 whatever it you did and going down to the engine room
8 to relieve the watch, if you would, please, try to
9 remember everything that you saw, that you heard, as
10 you were walking around and people that talked to you,
11 said something to you and what you may have told other
12 people. So, I'd like to, you know, of course, it's not
13 as critical, say the first fifteen minutes of your
14 watch, but after that, if you would start giving
15 getting a little detailed or if there's anything
16 notable that you saw, heard or was told,— please.

17 MR. RHODES: Okay, when I came down to the
18 watch, we were in the engine room and everybody was
19 talking. The oiler, Lee Chapman,—did a preliminary
20 round and then when he came back, I told him that I had
21 to go out and do a round myself. I was going to trace
22 the lube oil system so I put up the deck place in the
23 engine room and I traced out the lube oil system, and
24 once I traced the lube oil system, I also did a round
25 of the main engines, checked to look for leaks or any

1 abnormalities and I went and I checked the shaft alley,
2 checked the seals on the shaft seals and the oil level
3 for the shaft seals and looked around for any leaks.

4 Then I went into the, — I checked the fuel
5 oil and lube oil— purifiers and looked for if I heard
6 anything wrong. I didn't hear anything abnormal so I
7 went into the auxiliary room and I was down there for a
8 good thirty-five minutes into my watch and I was
9 planning on coming back at around quarter after twelve
10 just to be ready for the fire and boat drill scheduled
11 for twelve thirty and I went into the auxiliary room
12 and I was checking out the main generators and I
13 noticed number two generator started acting erratic.
14 It was shaking erratically, it was shaking erratically
15 and it was having intermittent speed. It would go from
16 a slower speed to a higher speed and it was shaking and
17 rattling, so I ran up to go and see what the problem
18 was and then, when I got up to the -- I also noticed
19 the lights dimming, brightening up, dimming, changing
20 the tone -- I ran up to the control booth, that's when
21 I opened the door and I saw fire coming out of the
22 forced panel closest to the starboard door, as you're
23 goin in.

24 I also had seen, heard a large popping sound
25 and seen the panels coming, sort of coming off the side

1 of the breaker board because what my immediate reaction
2 would be to, if I see an intermittent operation of the
3 generator, would be to either kill that generator, then
4 go to another generator or it was starting to lose
5 power, I would take off all of my non-essential
6 breakers, but when I saw a lot of fire and heard this
7 popping sound. It was like a loud popping sound. And
8 that's when I starting to go and get Co2 extinguishers
9 and dry chemical and get the ladderwater, hoses and
10 stuff together.

11 In fact, the junior engineer, who is which
12 would be Tom Cook, he told me to take off the number
13 two generator and that's when I killed the number two
14 generator. When he told me to kill number two
15 generator, that's when I went in -- that was after I
16 saw the fire.

17 After the fire, I was going back down to kill
18 -- he also reiterated it, kill that number two
19 generator. And then, of course, when I got there, a
20 fire hose and the ~~extinguishers~~extinguishers, the chief
21 and first came down and they saw it, they said, well,
22 get out of here. Get the smoke out.

23 I couldn't leave the engine room until
24 another officer came down to let me know what to do. I
25 had to stay right there. I knew that the junior

1 engineer and the oiler, they were already out there,
2 which was good. Then I also looked around for a pull-
3 down fire alarm, general alarm, but there wasn't one.
4 I was running around looking for one of those. I
5 couldn't find it in the engine room and there was no
6 other sound powered phone to get to.

7 So I just started to do what they trained us
8 in fire fighting school, to get ~~your stuff there~~,
9 immediately, where, as far as your fire extinguishers,
10 and fire hose, get all -- ~~to have all~~ I had this stuff
11 ready. That's what they taught us in fire fighting.
12 That's when other people came down and start putting
13 out the fire. I didn't hear anything abnormal prior to
14 that. That's all I can remember.

15 EXAMINER TOM: If you could just carry on
16 from there.

17 MR. RHODES: Oh, okay.

18 EXAMINER TOM: With as much detail as you
19 can.

20 MR. RHODES: After that I was out of the
21 engine room, on the main deck and then I started
22 helping getting other fire fighting gear as far as
23 SCBAD, portable SCBDA's and then Mr. Stan Jones, he was
24 down there immediately. He was suited up and ready to
25 go. He was down there. And then the first and the

1 chief came back and forth. They were just wearing
2 respirators.

3 We didn't have any SCBDA yet, but they wanted
4 to get in to close the emergency bus tie breaker and
5 they said, well, it's too hot; we can't get into it
6 there to get to it. And they kept trying to get to it.
7 They went in there once and they had to come out. It
8 was just too hot for them.

9 Then they went in again and started to --
10 Stan, apparently, tried to close a non-essential
11 breaker, open a non-essential breaker, excuse me, and
12 he got arced so they had to open these non-essential
13 breakers with the butt of a flashlight. They came out,
14 they kept giving us reports back and forth as to what
15 was going on down there.

16 Then they asked me what did I see and I told
17 them I saw, I heard, a large popping sound. I'd seen
18 the panels coming off, physically coming off, with fire
19 behind them and I saw fire on the overhead coming up
20 and down. I saw fire coming out the sides of the
21 panel. They said, okay, well make sure you write
22 everything down what you saw.

23 I didn't get a chance to write it down until
24 a little later because we had more people coming, the
25 AB, but it was basically the chief engineer, Stan and

1 the first that were going into that control room. They
2 kept coming back and giving us reports that it was too
3 hot for us to get in there. ~~It's~~ It was really, really
4 hot.

5 They would go in and try to get to those non-
6 essential breakers and they had a ~~heekus~~ look around to
7 find where the close our remote, fuel, remote,
8 auxiliary fuel, all of the remote shutoffs. So they
9 had another engineer do that. They started -- well, I
10 guess the Coast Guard team had come aboard. The Coast
11 Guard team went down there. They went in. They got
12 the fire under control and I think that's when the
13 first and Stan finally got the emergency bus tie
14 breaker ready.

15 We were kind of in the dark until they got
16 that going. Also, we asked for a safety line and a
17 couple of AB's came down and we said we needed a safety
18 line to put onto Stan. They just drew blanks and kind
19 of ignored me, a blank stare. I said, "We need a
20 safety line. You can't go down without a safety line."

21 They just ignored me and the chief mate came down and
22 -- they're AB's and --

23 EXAMINER TOM: Useless in other words.

24 MR. RHODES: Some. Finally, they got us a
25 steel safety line and attached it to them and it still

1 didn't do any good because it was still too hot. Then
2 when he did open the door another AB reported a reflash
3 and said there was a flame coming out through one of
4 the ventilation -- I don't know -- they reported more
5 fire so they had to keep the door closed and that's
6 when the chief said, "Okay, let's keep the door closed
7 until the Coast Guard." The Coast Guard came and they
8 went down there. They got it under control.

9 EXAMINER TOM: I'd like to get a little more
10 detail about what you initially saw with that
11 generator. If you could try to visualize it --

12 MR. RHODES: Okay.

13 EXAMINER TOM: -- in your mind and kind of
14 just, in as much detail as you can, tell me what you
15 saw and then what you heard, if anything and tell me
16 what was happening with the lights.

17 MR. RHODES: Okay, the generator, on it's
18 mounts, it was shaking, rocking back and forth.
19 Actually, it was rocking, yeah, back and forth and it
20 was rocking back and forth, I wouldn't say swiftly, but
21 in a very forceful manner and it was also changing
22 speed from a higher speed to a lower speed, a higher
23 speed to a lower speed and while it was doing that, the
24 lights were dimming and then they'd go bright. I think
25 they would do that with the speed change in the

1 generator itself.

2 Number one was doing it also. That's by
3 number two, when I saw this and the lights dimming and
4 the speed fluctuating on the number two auxiliary
5 generator. That's when I said, "Awe, man, something's
6 wrong here. I'm going to have to check the ~~air-control~~ |
7 room." And that's when I saw the fire in the control
8 room.

9 EXAMINER TOM: About how long were the lights
10 dimming and going up and down?

11 MR. RHODES: Oh, about, from the time I saw
12 that to get up to the control room, I'd say about a
13 minute and-a-half. Well, as soon as I saw it, I looked
14 because it didn't take that long because I wanted to
15 look around the generator and see if there was no fuel
16 or a fuel problem. I wanted to see whether there was
17 something wrong with the generator there, at first,
18 down there and then I ran up to the control room.

19 EXAMINER TOM: About how long was this
20 fluctuation in lighting? How long did that persist, if
21 you can remember?

22 MR. RHODES: Oh, that, okay, well, when I
23 took off the number two generator, it had stopped
24 temporarily. I'd say for maybe another minute and-a-
25 half. And then number one generator was acting

1 erratic, the same behavior; speeding up and slowing
2 down and the lights continued dimming. And then
3 changing from dim to bright, dim to bright. And acted
4 that continued on -- throughout the time we were
5 observing the fire and it just kept going on and on.

6 And that's finally when the chief said,
7 "Well, there's no use for a number one generator. You
8 might as well take that off the line because it's just
9 feeding the power to the fire. So I'm going to take
10 that off." So he went down and took off the emergency
11 generator. I mean, the number one generator, excuse
12 me. But they were doing the same behavior, the lights
13 dimming and that was well into, as the fire was raging
14 on. As the fire was raging on, we still had the one
15 generator going and maybe five or ten minutes later
16 that's when the chief decided he wanted to take it off
17 the line.

18 He also ran down and asked, "Did ~~he~~ you shut
19 the lube oil and fuel oil to the purifiers?" If not,
20 they'll spray all over the place, then you'll really
21 have a fire then, you really had a problem. He shut
22 that down and ran down and shut that off.

23 See, what got me nervous was because that
24 happened before in the Malaspena last year on my
25 birthday. The actual, not the motor, not the engine,

1 the prime mover, but the actual generator itself on
2 number one blew up. It exploded inside because the
3 exciter came apart and I was on my round again and I'd
4 seen the same thing occurring, speeding up and slowing,
5 lights dimming. I thought, oh, here we go again. The
6 exciter came off, you know, and that's when I ran up to
7 the control room to take that off the line and, of
8 course, I couldn't get in because there was fire in
9 there.

10 EXAMINER TOM: Okay, so, after the chief
11 secured the number two generator, you were in the
12 engine room at that time?

13 MR. RHODES: No, actually, the chief secured
14 number one. I secured number two.

15 EXAMINER TOM: I'm sorry.

16 MR. RHODES: Yeah.

17 EXAMINER TOM: Number one and then you were
18 still in the engine room at that time or were you
19 outside?

20 MR. RHODES: I was outside the engine room.
21 I was at the top of, at the entrance to the engine
22 room. I was just helping, changing out SCDBA's and
23 whatever someone needed, just follow orders from the
24 mate. The chief mate, because he was, -- they were
25 down there, you know, they were on it immediately. The

1 mates were down there and they got the situation up
2 there organized and under control.

3 EXAMINER TOM: So what did you see when you
4 went up there? Did you see the fire party dressing out
5 and --

6 MR. RHODES: Well, there was one AB, then the
7 chief mate came down to get things organized and it was
8 Stan Jones, the third engineer, and then the first and
9 chief engineer. Stan had on a SCBDA and the AB was
10 there was an SCBDA and the chief mate was getting fire
11 parties organized. I guess they, -- they deemed to
12 keep just a couple of guys there with SCBDA's to go in
13 and out, ~~excuse me, it~~ which was the AB and Mr. Jones.

14
15 Of course, then, the first, he put on an
16 SCBDA and he was just ~~standing Stan and~~ first and the
17 AB was the back up and then the chief mate had the
18 purser, the chief mate started organizing getting
19 bottles changed in and out and fire extinguishers
20 brought and more safety lines and just all the safety
21 equipment, they had everything coordinated exactly what
22 to do. And then, Chief mate, -- anybody have any other
23 suggestions about this, let me know. And they took
24 charge and carried out the plan.

25 The only problem was there was a car in the

1 way. There's a big yellow block there and there's not
2 supposed to be a car there, but there was a car in the
3 way so that kind of hampered things a little bit, but
4 they adapted, they got around it and took care of it.

5 The mates did a really good job. It probably could
6 have gotten worse if they didn't get things organized.

7 EXAMINER TOM: So how many people on the
8 emergency squad did you see get suited up, not
9 including Mr. Jones or the first and the AB?

10 MR. RHODES: AB -- who else did I see get
11 suited up -- oh, I also saw another AB that was suited
12 up, but he didn't go in. He was suited up and ready.
13 That's was only the other person I saw that was suited
14 up. I think there was another person, but I didn't see
15 him. I just heard there was someone else who was
16 ready.

17 EXAMINER TOM: Okay, and we've been told
18 something about some Coast Guard fire fighters coming
19 over. Do you remember seeing any fire fighters from
20 the Coast Guard --

21 MR. RHODES: Uh-huh.

22 EXAMINER TOM: -- and about when they arrived
23 and what they did, what you saw, relative to them?

24 MR. RHODES: Oh, they were there. I was away
25 from right where they were at to be out of the way. I

1 think I saw five Coast Guard -- they had a portable,
2 you know, oxygen generators and they stood around for a
3 while and then they went in later, went into to contain
4 it, get it under control so that you can get to that
5 emergency bus tie. But, yeah, they were there. They
6 were aboard. I didn't even see them when they came
7 aboard. I just knew -- somebody said the Coast Guard
8 is here and it turned out they were there with their
9 gear and went down there and started to fight the fire
10 also.

11 I did go to the top of the ladder, going into
12 the engine room, and I saw when they went in to start -
13 - one was standing, kneeling and then feeling around
14 like fire fighters do, went in and did whatever they
15 did to put it out. So they went in and contained it
16 and the mates cleared the area for them to get in and
17 do their thing.

18 EXAMINER TOM: Do you remember about how soon
19 after the event, these Coast Guard fellows showed up?

20 MR. RHODES: After the fire --

21 EXAMINER TOM: Yeah.

22 MR. RHODES: -- I would say maybe twenty
23 minutes, from what I saw. I don't know if was sooner.

24 I didn't see them until twenty minutes later.

25 EXAMINER TOM: And when they arrived and you

1 saw them for the first time, what were they doing?
2 Were they talking with the mate or talking amongst
3 themselves or --

4 MR. RHODES: Well, they were talking with the
5 mate. There was one guy in charge and he was talking
6 with mate and talking to the chief and the first, who
7 were relaying information back and forth. He had his
8 mask, talking through his mask, sort of like a fast
9 food restaurant -- rrrh -- but he was talking to the
10 mate. The mate was relaying information to him, back
11 and forth and they were assessing some kind of
12 information and then, after they talked, the
13 information from the mate and chief engineer and the
14 first, that's when they went down in there because, I
15 guess, the chief was telling him it was really hot, we
16 got to get in there to get this breaker going and to
17 get some power.

18 EXAMINER TOM: By that time, the chief had
19 already secured the number one generator?

20 MR. RHODES: Yes, he had already secured it.
21 Yeah, that was, like, maybe five, ten minutes later.
22 While the fire was raging, he said, I may as well kill
23 them. This is only exacerbating the problem.

24 EXAMINER TOM: Okay.

25 MR. RHODES: Remember there was a cutter

1 orbiting the ship and then the Taku was coming to come
2 along side there to discharge the passengers. That
3 went pretty orderly too. That was -- I mean, was with
4 the chief. We went up to the emergency generator to
5 check out the emergency generator and went back.

6 We ~~They~~ were clearing the people off in an
7 organized manner, mates and the purser. And some
8 people got their animals, dogs and cats one guy had to
9 go get his parrot so we helped him get his parrot. Not
10 that I have some kind of bird I owned a bird, -- I'll
11 ~~feed a bird.~~ Ah, just I'll give him some seeds.
12 He'll ~~be~~ be okay. All right.

13 And by that time, while that was going on,
14 the Coast Guard was down there and they were putting it
15 out with dry chemical blasts and here and there. They
16 were in there, they already controlled it and they were
17 just having people stand off of reflash. Of course,
18 there was another reflash so they had to go down there
19 again to get to that reflash. And there was another
20 reflash and had to go down there again. ~~The next~~
21 ~~time~~ And they finally -- we got it put out.

22 MS. WEAVER: Each time there was a reflash,
23 was it the Coast Guard that went down there to put it
24 out?

25 MR. RHODES: Yes.